

A BAROQUE POEM

Building a violin begins
with a walk in the woods
to choose the sacrificial tree.

A saw blade bites, the tree
falls, forsaking its roots.
Sawn boards dry, each one,

tapped, has its own voice.
The violin plates, front and back,
marry, gain ribs and neck,

pegs and varnish, gleaming,
lose all semblance of raw wood
but for that sweet maple voice.

In my hands a line of notes
became the devil's interval,
my bow a butcher's knife,

a torture device inflicting
notes like a thousand tiny cuts.
Not for me concerti grossi

by Arcangelo Corelli nor
Vivaldi, dear Red Priest,
although I worship still

at the basilica of the baroque.
The only hymn I ever played
was "Holy, Holy, Holy."

FOR LOVE OF *EMBOUCHURE*

Let me savor the umami
of this succulent new word.

Let it be a baby's first ice cream,
no need to explain vanilla
melting on the spoon.

Let the syllables drip down my chin
before an academic adult defines it,
consigns it to my word hoard.

Let *embouchure* mean
Alakazam! One-two-three...
a silver dollar plucked from my ear
and from my mouth a white dove.

PASSING STORM

Cows stare into blue-white space.

Weather rolls in,
down the foothills.
Water like evil
seeks the lowest level,
diverging and pooling at their feet.
Rain tugs its thunderhead
beyond the hills.

Cows stare into blue-white space.

SPEAKING OF BONES

Hallux and pollex—
big toe and thumb,
I'm happy with two of each.
Anatomy matters.
I take none of mine for granted—
like the tarsals in my feet
marching me across the room
and up the stairs, love

the tiny ossicles in my ears,
each condyle of a long bone,
their marrow and ligaments.
I love all 206 bones still
nestled in my flesh, not one
a bone of contention.

Once an olecranon process
cracked—an equestrian error,
an unplanned dismount—
and for weeks there was
no leaning on my right elbow,
no longer right. Recently,
I met a young girl
with two good legs
and no right arm.

TO FAKE AN ELEPHANT

We begin with a dead animal,
bone and muscle discarded,
the treated skin clinging
to light-weight forms.

(an elephant should not be light)

The museum crew
guides pieces into place,
erases signs of manufacture,
paints a diorama backdrop,
installs the plate-glass wall.

School children visit,
can't believe their eyes—
“Oh, hey, an elephant!”

The herd stampedes, searching,
butting open heavy doors,

(elephants are heavy too)

they find their missing sister—
no scent
no motion, hollow—
They mill around, leave. Hollow!